

Miscellaneous

Heraldry, Granting of Arms & the Faculty of Forensic & Legal Medicine

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1. Background

I am honoured to have been asked to attend the first Annual General Meeting of the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine to say something about the Grant of Arms, how the different components were designed and what they represent. I should perhaps first define heraldry which has been described as the hereditary use of certain designs initially on a shield and subsequently on crests and heraldic badges. As such it appeared in much of Europe in the second quarter of the 12th century. Men, women and corporate bodies originally assumed their own arms and in England in cases where two people bore the same coat of arms there would be a Case in the High Court of Chivalry to decide which person had the better right. One of the best known cases was that of *Scrope versus Grosvenor* heard between 1385 and 1395. The most recent case in the Court of Chivalry is that of *Manchester Corporation versus Manchester Palace of Varieties* which was heard in 1954 and won by Manchester Corporation which objected to the use of their arms by the Theatre Company. As well as being self assumed arms were granted by Sovereigns. An interesting aspect of English heraldry is that since the 15th century when heraldry began to be more regulated in England the power to grant new arms has been delegated by the Crown to the three senior Heralds or Kings of Arms namely Garter King of Arms, Clarenceux King of Arms and Norroy King of Arms.

In 1417, King Henry V issued Writs to the Sheriffs of various Counties stating that in future men might not assume their own arms and the earliest surviving grant by an English King of Arms dates from 1439 and is a grant not to an individual but to a corporate body, the Worshipful Company of Drapers in the City of London. The Heralds were and remain part of the Royal Household but in

1484 were incorporated by King Richard III into a College of Arms, which has occupied the same site in the City of London since 1555. Whilst the power to grant arms was vested in the three Kings of Arms the College itself became the official registry for Arms. Till the late 17th century Clarenceux was responsible for all grants south of the River Trent and Norroy which is a corruption of Nor and Roi King of the North was responsible for grants north of the River Trent. Garter King of Arms who is the principal of the three Kings of Arms granted arms to peers and certain important bodies being also joined on occasion with the other Kings of Arms. Since the late 17th century Garter has signed all grants of arms and in the case of personal grants south of the River Trent he makes these with Clarenceux and personal grants north of the River Trent with Norroy and in Northern Ireland with Ulster a position which was joined to that of Norroy in 1943. All three Kings of Arms since the late 17th century have made grants together of arms to corporate bodies.

2. Grant of arms

Since the late 17th century a grant of arms has been initiated by a petition to the Earl Marshal requesting him to direct the Kings of Arms to grant arms to the petitioner. The office of Earl Marshal has been hereditary in the Dukes of Norfolk since 1672. The Earl Marshal has always been responsible to the Crown for the College of Arms and the reason why all grants start with a petition to the Earl Marshal is to prevent the Kings of Arms making grants to unsuitable people or bodies, a subject about which there were complaints in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

The first stage in the grant to the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine was therefore the submission of a petition to the Earl Marshal. This petition states that the

Council of the Royal College of Physicians of London approved the establishment of the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine on the 14th day of September 2005. Although established by the Royal College of Physicians your Faculty is a separate body and could therefore petition for its own armorial bearings following the tradition of the Royal College of Physicians itself which was granted arms by Christopher Barker Garter King of Arms on the 20th of September 1546, the grantee then being described in the patent as the Company and College of Physicians of London. Since the 15th century grants have been made by Letters Patent and painted and scrivened on vellum and since 1672 a hand written copy of the complete text of every grant of arms has been kept at the College of Arms. Before 1672, we have to rely on the notebooks of the Kings of Arms and Heralds which record earlier grants in varying degrees of detail.

3. Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine

Your President, Guy Norfolk, petitioned on behalf of the Faculty to have a grant of arms that is the part of the design borne on the shield, a crest which is borne on the helmet above the shield, and a badge. The badge is a free standing heraldic device derived from the medieval retainer's badges and the best known examples are perhaps the red and white roses of the Houses of Lancaster and York. Possession of a badge entitles one to have a standard painted on the patent which displays the arms next to the flagpole and usually three representations of the badge divided by motto bands on which appears the motto. Technically the motto is the one part of the design which is not formally granted as legal property cannot be granted over a group of words. Despite this mottoes have had great significance over the centuries and some of them derive from medieval battle cries and are the one part of the full achievement of armorial bearings which people remember.

The petition states that the Faculty was established with the object of providing a qualification namely Membership of the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine for persons engaged on duties customarily undertaken by Forensic Medical Examiners formerly known as Police Surgeons, medically qualified Her Majesty's Coroners and those Doctors who work for one of the three United Kingdom Medical Protection and Defence Organisations namely The Medical Defence Union, The Medical Protection Society and the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland. In considering the design it was therefore important to balance these different elements whilst at the same time producing a design that is simple but distinct (see Fig. 1). I make an observation that doctors have always had a quirky approach to the design of arms. One example is that of the urinal in a basket granted to the late 15th century physician Lewis Caerlion or Caerleon (see Oxford D.N.B.) and the other being a surgeon (Stanley Osborn Aylett) for whom I acted in 1992 who wanted a colon on the arms and his cat holding a scalpel as a crest.



Fig. 1.

In English heraldry there is usually but not always a geometrical division of the shield and then three or four representations of the same charge. As a geometrical division of the shield a *pall reversed* has been chosen. This resembles an inverted letter Y. The pall when not reversed is derived from the pallium or ecclesiastical vestment and the habit of reversing shields which can be seen in the margin of the various 13th century histories written by Matthew Parris to indicate death has a long pedigree. A pall is also a cloth placed over a coffin. A pall reversed therefore seemed a simple appropriate geometrical division of the shield and it is charged with ermine spots as a reference to the law and the legal aspect of your work. It is shown between three swords as a reference to justice and the law and they are entwined by serpents as a reference to medicine. The blazon or technical description of the arms is *Gules a Pall reversed Ermine between three Swords points upwards Argent hilts pommels quillons and each entwined by a Serpent Or*. Gules is the heraldic term for red, appropriate as a background colour as a reference to blood, argent is the heraldic term for white or silver the hilt of the sword is the handle, the pommel the spherical end, and the quillons the cross piece. All these are gold as is the serpent.

I shall now move on to the crest. This is borne on the helmet and occasionally funeral helms survive in churches with a three dimensional model of the crest above the helmet. One such example is that of the Black Prince in Canterbury Cathedral dating from 1376. The blazon of the crest is *On a Helm with a wreath Argent and Gules issuing from a circlet of alternate Fleurs de lys and Pomegranates a Serpent torqued erect Or holding in the mouth a Pair of Scales Or the dishes Argent*. The distinct feature of a crest which is often shown on its own and not on the helm is the crest wreath. This is of six twists of cloth usually alternately of a metal, in this case argent, i.e. white or silver, and of a colour, here gules. This represents the twisted cloth worn round the helm and is similar to the cloth which fixes an Arab head dress to this day. Those of you familiar with the arms of the Royal College of Physicians will know that

there is a pomegranate on the arms and five demi fleurs de lys. The pomegranate is a symbol of fertility and regeneration and was also a Royal Badge in the early 16th century being particularly connected with Catherine of Aragon and Granada in Spain. Fleurs de lys appeared on the English Royal Arms from the time that Edward the Third claimed the Throne of France in the mid 14th century till 1801 when they were dropped. It seemed appropriate therefore that a serpent should issue from a circlet of fleurs de lys and Pomegranates just as your Faculty has risen up out of the Royal College of Physicians. Designs which have some visual unity between the different elements often work well and a serpent as a reference to medicine is included with the scales which it holds taken from the badge of the Association of Forensic Physicians.

The third and final part of the design is the badge (see Fig. 2). This is blazoned *A Wheel Or surmounted by three Swords in pall reversed points outwards Argent hilts pommels quillons and each entwined by a Serpent Or.* The wheel is taken from the badge of the Coroners Society of England and Wales and the serpents and swords from the arms with their geometrical pattern reflecting that of the shield. A

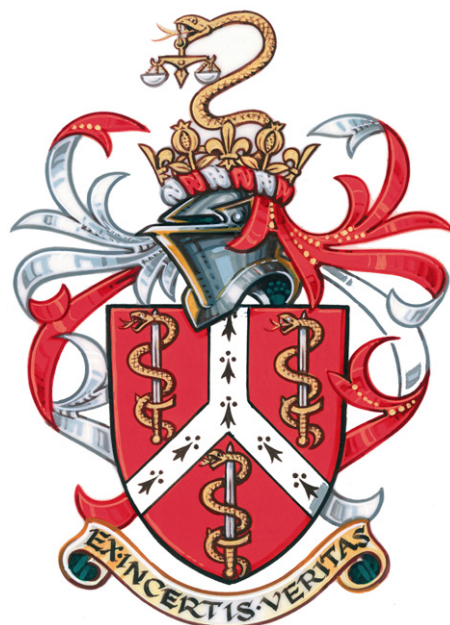


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

wheel is a symbol of changing fortune and is therefore suitable when combined with references to justice and medicine.

Finally as a motto a Latin version of DOUBT LEADS TO TRUTH was requested and EX INCERTIS VERITAS is considered the best rendering of this. The motto is usually shown on a scroll beneath the shield but could be used separately with the crest or with the badge and the badge is something which the Faculty could license its members to use if it wished. The arms and the crest are the property of the Faculty as is the Badge but it can allow those associated with it to display the badge if it wishes to do so. Similarly the motto could also be used.

In the depiction of the arms you will see what appears to be stylized acanthus leaves or seaweed issuing from the hel-

met. This is known as mantling and represents the slashed cloth depicted with English armorial bearings. Traditionally it was said to have been slashed by the Saracens swords on the Crusades and is now represented in a full achievement of arms as shown when a helmet appears.

The text of the Letters Patent states that the Earl Marshal issued his Warrant to the three Kings of Arms directing them to grant the arms, crest and badge on 21st December 2006 (see [Fig. 3](#)). The Letters Patent granting the armorial bearings signed by Garter, Clarenceux and Norroy and Ulster Kings of Arms are dated the 30th of January 2007 in the 55th year of the reign of Our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth the Second and it is with great pleasure that I presented these to Your President on my own behalf and that of the other two Kings of Arms.